

Lateral

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Review of *Art as Revolt: Thinking Politics Through Immanent Aesthetics*, edited by David Fancy and Hans Skott-Myhre (McGill-Queen's University Press)

by Sean T. Leavey | Book Reviews, Issue 10.1 (Spring 2021)

ABSTRACT The entanglements of "the aesthetic" and the political-economic have long been addressed in the areas of philosophy, cultural studies, and media theory. In this edited volume, David Fancy and Hans Skott-Myhre have assembled a collection of essays aimed at examining a range of aesthetic approaches to political projects untethered to "capitalist assumptions," while looking toward the possibilities of "post-capitalist futures." Through their respective contributions, the authors offer their readers ways to envision the potential for running lines of flight away from capital's apparatuses of capture by engaging in creative practice.

KEYWORDS aesthetics, art, politics, popular

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During the first two decades of the twenty-first century, new subjectivities and social relations have been formed through popular culture and art as micropolitical modes of desirous production, developing and circulating aesthetics, affects, and identifications. These conditions have made such concepts central to the performance of cultural-political analysis. David Fancy and Hans Skott-Myhre's *Art as Revolt: Thinking Politics Through Immanent Aesthetics*, is an edited collection of essays examining a range of aesthetic approaches to political projects that escape capitalist subsumption, while looking toward new possibilities and futures (10). To Fancy and Scott-Myhre, *Art as Revolt* is an exploration of the autopoietic productive power of art and popular culture within political contexts, in which readers are given the opportunity to "think about the force of Art writ large" (3) through philosophies of immanence (4), most notably written about by theorists Baruch Spinoza, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (7).

Focusing on a disparate range of areas such as sci-fi, punk rock, virtual reality (VR) technologies, queer aesthetics, and live role play, the works are divided into three thematic categories: "technology and futures," "aesthetics and resistance" and "autoethnographies of the post-identitarian."

Starting off the first segment of *Art as Revolt*—"Technology and Futures"—Tim Beck asserts that VR is a techno-scientific/artistic medium that produces what Deleuze and Guattari termed "nomads," (42) which are subjects able to escape "mechanic enslavement" through the indeterminate number of actualization processes possible within the context of the virtual (50). Accessing the capacities to avoid rendering by the capitalist machine allows for the explicit imagining and building of new worlds, as Malisa Kurtz's essay exemplifies in their deconstruction of colonialism in the genre of science fiction, which is enacted with the dual purpose of envisaging and constructing postcolonial futures (110). Applying the concept of "quasi-causal machines" to comprehend relationships between pasts, presents, and futures (54), Douglas Ord speculates about the metaphysical connections between seemingly distinct incidents, specifically, four different protest actions by the punk band Pussy Riot and the impact of the Chelyabinsk meteor. Bringing another analysis of digital media, Nicole Land, Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, and Eric Loveland discuss how the creative play of "Minecraft" could be used to challenge the dominant logics of capitalism already embedded within the popular video game (92). Overall, this initial section supplies readers with examples of how literary genres, digital technologies, and punk-guerilla theatre are all means for the immanent formation of subjects and social relations incompatible with the capitalist system, which unfold and reverberate in ways that complicate our perceptions of linear time and "discrete" events.

"Aesthetics and Resistance," the second portion of the book, is concerned with the fine and popular arts as sites of both creativity and revolt. By bringing a schizoanalytical lens to their examination of Paul Soldner's alchemic-artistic-scientific method for producing American raku pottery, Kathleen Skott-Myhre, Dave Collins, and Hans Skott-Myhre illustrate how creative practices intrinsically contain the immanent potential for recoding desires and eluding the molar control of form and process (154). Explaining the relationships between aesthetics, gendered performances and representations, Peter Rehberg uses the post-porn fanzine *Butt* to theorize the body as a Deleuzian desiring machine that becomes-subject under Butlerian conditions, powered by an asignifying autopoietic force while simultaneously being ideologically organized (168). To Rehberg, the queer aesthetics of *Butt* amount to significant representational and material disruptions to the market-homogenization of mainstream pornography (171). Exploring the "blues" in musical form, Mark Bishop and Hans Skott-Myhre argue that it is an assemblage constitutive of geographic areas, instrumental tones, notational structures and cultural affirmations (136). Lastly, in keeping with the theme of music, Hans Skott-Myhre, and Chris Richardson demonstrate how hip-hop figure Tupac Shakur's work was an immanent "artistic assemblage" that will forever possess the capability to compose global minoritarian geographies and subaltern revolutionary sensibilities, in spite of the consistent threat of capitalist reterritorializations of Shakur's image (191).

The final section of the book, "Autoethnographies of the Post-Identitarian," problematizes the Kantian "unified self" by looking at individuation in the social formation of political relationships beyond that of the encapsulated individual (20). Recounting an experience as a volunteer actor in a training exercise with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, David Fancy discusses how after breaking from the script of "psychopathic hostage taker" (227) and raising larger social grievances with the prison-industrial complex, policing, and capitalism, the simulation he was participating in was nudged toward simulacrum (230). Fancy's immanent approach to role playing blended the orders of reality and within that environment, led to the co-creation of new and

unpredicted narratives among all involved (229). In the only other chapter in this section, Joanna Perkins envisions the potential of mass mobilization by positioning autoethnography as a Spinozan technique for evading subsumption by the late-capitalist "zombie politics" described by Henry Giroux (202). In writing oneself, the author is enmeshed in understanding and process, which opens up possibilities for enacting our zombification beyond the narrow dead/alive hunger and desires that drive the politics of consumption (202–203). In their becoming through autoethnography, Perkins' zombie-subjects are, in authorship, intersubjectively merged within themselves and with their readers, occurring in a sense of common interest (211). Thus, as Perkins explains, this rethinking of zombification produces Spinozan agents as emergent affective embodiments of Hans Skott-Myhre and Kathleen Skott-Myhre's concept of "political love,"¹ which is the act of giving love, fully and without reservation, as an immanent creative force of and with interdependent resonances (212). Ideally, such a love would, in turn, bind the horde and direct its desire toward anti/post-capitalist political projects (213).

Spanning an array of objects of inquiry, the authors and editors of *Art as Revolt* have provided useful insights for waging aesthetic insurrections against capitalism and building better worlds through art and popular culture. Importantly, the diversity of technologies, genres, and tactical methods presented in this compilation should inspire confidence in readers that there are many lines of flight to run. As Deleuze reminds us in "Postscript on Control Societies," "it's not a matter of worrying or of hoping for the best, but of finding new weapons."²

Notes

1. Hans Skott-Myhre and Kathleen Skott-Myhre. "Radical Youth Work: Love and Community," *Relational Child and Youth Care Practice* 20, no. 3 (2007): 48–57. ↩
2. Gilles Deleuze. "Postscript on Control Societies." In G. Deleuze, *Negotiations*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 178. ↩

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